

AUTAUGA COUNTY

Honorable Phillip Wood

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Council Priorities

1. All school age children in Autauga County should have minimal truancy, high achievement and strong parental support.

The need for support of the S.T.I. Home Edition computer system in schools to address the issues of truancy, academic achievement and parental communication. (\$1,300 initial cost for two schools.) Investigate John Tyson's program in Mobile for multi-disciplinary team for at-risk youth.

2. Children in Autauga County should live in homes free of neglect and deprivation.

Develop a community system to identify children in homes of neglect and deprivation. Publicize and educate the community and caregivers to encourage requests for "welfare checks" to be conducted. Develop a screening mechanism to avoid "welfare" stigma for caregivers who are not acting criminally.

3. School readiness begins at birth.

Raise awareness of importance of pre-k education for children birth to 5 years of age through the following: sponsor a booth at City Fest to distribute information about the CPC Council. Set up a meeting at Pilgrims Baptist Church to reach families of children that are more at risk for not receiving early learning opportunities. Set up a meeting with the Hispanic community to provide information on the need for early education. Coordinate with Prattville Progress for a weekly space entitled "Did You Know?" that would allow all committees on the council to submit facts to educate citizens in Autauga County on the issues facing the children in our community and create public awareness of the Council itself. Meet with a pediatrician from Partners in Pediatrics for more information on the issue and to enlist their support in providing training and education to parents in Autauga County. Meet with childcare providers in Autauga County to enlist their support and provide training and education about the importance of early education. Continue coordination between Autauga CPC and River Region United Way's Initiative for Youth.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

School readiness begins at birth

Action Steps

- 1) Raise awareness of importance of pre-k education for children birth to 5 years of age through the following: a. sponsor a booth at City Fest to distribute information about the CPC Council. b. Set up a meeting at Pilgrims Baptist Church to reach families of children that are more at risk for not receiving early learning opportunities. c. Set up a meeting with the Hispanic community to provide information on the need for early education. d. Coordinate with Prattville Progress for a weekly space entitled "Did You Know?" that would allow all committees on the council to submit facts to educate citizens in Autauga County on the issues facing the children in our community and create public awareness of the Council itself.
- 2) Meet with a pediatrician from Partners in Pediatrics for more information on the issue and to enlist their support in providing training and education to parents in Autauga County.
- 3) Meet with childcare providers in Autauga County to enlist their support and provide training and education about the importance of early education.
- 4) Continue coordination between Autauga CPC and River Region United Way's Initiative for Youth.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Support community in character building to attract development

Action Steps

- 1) Support becoming a Community of Character.
- 2) Bring speakers to schools several times a year to address character issues.
- 3) Identify resources to support this in the community.

Explore the Hispanic influence in the county

Action Steps

- 1) Survey the Hispanic population. Bring a member of that community into the Children's Policy Council.

Support outreach to single parents with at-risk children

Action Steps

- 1) Survey the extent of this population.
- 2) Find resources currently available.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

All school age children in Autauga County should have minimal truancy, high achievement and strong parental support

Action Steps

1) The need for support of the S.T.I. Home Edition computer system in schools to address the issues of truancy, academic achievement and parental communication. (\$1,300 initial cost for two schools.) Investigate John Tyson's program in Mobile for multi-disciplinary team for at-risk youth.

All school age children in Autauga County should be reading at the appropriate grade levels

Action Steps

1) The continued support of supplemental reading programs: Passport (up to grade 3).
2) Corrective Reading (grade 4 to junior high).
3) Failure Free Reading (junior high to high school) at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Strengthen with the Prattville City Council the local smoking ban

Action Steps

1) Promote the benefits to the City Council.
2) Meet with governmental representatives to explore the opportunities.

To increase understanding and awareness of services available for Spanish speaking families living in our county

Action Steps

1) To distribute more broadly the current CPC Spanish brochures which list available services.
2) To have translated into Spanish other beneficial information.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Educate the parents to increase parent involvement with their children concerning issues relating to at-risk behavior

Action Steps

- 1) Neighborhood watches for children.
- 2) Orientation at high schools and junior high schools.
- 3) Get local businesses involved with a lunch and learn session.
- 4) Ask businesses to use their marquees for community awareness concerning issues affecting our children.
- 5) Have everyone be aware of where sex offenders are residing in our community.
- 6) Have parents become more aware of computer usage.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Children in Autauga County should live in homes free of neglect and deprivation

Action Steps

- 1) Develop a community system to identify children in homes of neglect and deprivation.
- 2) Publicize and educate the community and caregivers to encourage requests for "welfare checks" to be conducted.
- 3) Develop a screening mechanism to avoid "welfare" stigma for caregivers who are not acting criminally.

Children in Autauga County should live free of drug abuse

Action Steps

- 1) Develop and support community awareness programs on access and abuse of prescription drugs by youth.

Children in Autauga County should live free of violence

Action Steps

- 1) Support and initiate anti-violence and problem solving programs in schools and communities.
- 2) Find support for the Autauga County Teen Court program.

Policy Recommendations

- Provide increased funding for short term and long term placement/services for children and adolescents who are dually diagnosed with mental retardation and mental illness.
- The state standards are requiring special education kids to be placed in regular classes, increasing dropout rates, etc. The state standards need to be revised or the state needs to fight to repeal NCLB.
- Provide funding for juvenile detention beds.
- Provide transportation to juvenile detention and DYS facilities.
- Change the way the law is written in respect to the definition of CHINS (Children in Need of Supervision) so the only way you can commit a child to VOA (Violation of Aftercare) or VOP (Violation of Probation) is if the child has committed a delinquent committable offense.
- Develop statewide criteria for preschool curriculum (4 & 5 year old) for children to be prepared for kindergarten to remedy the first grade retention rate.
- Address issues concerning DHR's ability to assess the safety of children in homes of poverty, deprivation, and non-criminal, unintended neglect in order to provide a "safe atmosphere" enabling families to be receptive to assistance and not in fear of getting entered in the statewide system/central registry.
- Alabama State Department of Education to reevaluate standards to achieve under Adequate Yearly Progress. State standards are requiring special education kids to be placed in regular classes, increasing dropout rates, etc.
- The state standards need to be revised or the state needs to fight to repeal NCLB.
- Funding for detention beds. Increase funding for detention subsidy money.
- State to provide transportation to detention and DYS facilities.

Accomplishments

- Parent Involvement and Skills Committee has initiated the school orientation night program. Someone from the Children's Policy Council attends these orientations and distributes information, not only from the CPC but also from other community organizations.
- Economic Security - We have a member of the Hispanic community on the Autauga County CPC.
- We have initiated our support of Prattville becoming a Community of Character. The VISTA Volunteer had the opportunity to speak about this program on Public Radio on July 26. She also attended the formation meeting of this program.